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[Vietnam: Hanoi's first authoritative reaction to President Nixon's Vietnam speech suggests that it is interested in exploring some of the key issues addressed in the President's message.

A commentary on 17 May in the party daily Nhan Dan does not reject outright any of the US proposals for a settlement, nor does it explicitly rule out the proposals as a basis for negotiation in Paris. The commentary appears to invite further dialogue by discussing in detail some of the issues raised in the President's message and by describing which features of the US package the Communists object to and why.

The statement focuses on the issues of future political arrangements in South Vietnam and troop withdrawals. As in the Front's ten points, Hanoi argues that the US, as the interloper in South Vietnam, must withdraw completely so that the Vietnamese can organize themselves without outside "interference." Once this ritualistic point is made, however, Hanoi devotes some attention to the US proposal. The statement expresses North Vietnam's fear that the US intends to keep some troops in country after a general withdrawal as part of the American plan for a political solution.

Hanoi clearly finds Washington's formulations on general elections the most unacceptable of the eight points. The commentary contends that the President not only ignored the idea of a coalition government, but, in demanding that any future participants in the political process in South Vietnam renounce the use of force, he in effect called for a unilateral Communist disarmament. This, Hanoi charges, is tantamount to a Communist surrender to Saigon. On the other hand, the North Vietnamese may have attempted to inject a note of moderation into their handling of the President's]

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[declaration that the US has ruled out a military solution in Vietnam. The statement is pointedly acknowledged early in the commentary, which thereafter refrains from repeating the standard propaganda line that the US is intensifying the war.

* * * *

The level of violence increased over most of the country during the weekend. The Communists launched a heavy ground attack on allied positions near Xuan Loc, the capital of Long Khanh Province. At least 54 of the enemy were killed, while allied casualties, mostly American, totaled 18 dead and 57 wounded.

Several sharp fights flared in I Corps. Early on 18 May US troops killed 125 Communists approximately 43 miles southwest of Hue. US casualties were 12 killed and 79 wounded. The air base at Da Nang was struck by several rockets and mortars over the weekend, but damage and casualties were light.

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NOTES

Denmark - North Vietnam: A commission of the Danish Parliament now considering the possibility of recognizing North Vietnam will report its conclusions at the end of the month. At present Denmark has diplomatic relations with Saigon and informal contact with Hanoi through ambassadorial channels in Peking. The parliamentary investigation developed in response to pressure from opposition parties that Denmark match Sweden's recognition of Hanoi earlier this year. The government's position that no change in the status quo should be made before the war ends will, however, probably not be reversed by parliament, at least in the near future.

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NATO: (The members of NATO will consider today whether or not to give the US the green light to present its draft seabeds arms control treaty this week at the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee (ENDC) in Geneva. Several of the Allies, particularly the UK, have expressed surprise that they were not given more time to consider the draft. Others, including Norway and Italy, appear to be disappointed that the treaty is not more far-reaching. All of the Allies seem likely, however, to go along with the US desire to present a counterproposal to the USSR's draft treaty before ENDC recesses for a month on 23 May.)

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NATO: (Member governments are giving little support so far to a US proposal to have the Alliance consider environmental and sociological problems of the member states. The initiative has encountered resistance because of the complexity and unfamiliarity of the subjects involved. NATO Secretary General Brosio has suggested that he tour NATO capitals this summer to discuss the subject. He was initially skeptical, but now considers the proposal important.)

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Brazil: [Army artillerymen are pressing hard for new equipment, particularly equipment for three field artillery battalions and one battery of missiles (type unspecified). [

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[many in the army are irritated by US arms sale policies, but most prefer US equipment and hope that it can be obtained. If US hardware is not available, however, the Brazilians would almost surely turn to European suppliers rather than let other Latin American nations get ahead of them.]

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